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SUBJECT: INDONESIA'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ENTERS LAST LAP

REF: JAKARTA 1048 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: With just over a week to go before Indonesia's presidential election, President Yudhoyono is maintaining his sizable lead in the polls. Candidate debates held last week were inconclusive. During a visit to Central Java, Pol/C spoke to numerous observers who predicted that the President will easily win that vote-rich region. There was a palpable lack of excitement over a campaign that has had few fireworks, so far. Over all, commentators remain split as to whether Yudhoyono has enough support to win over 50% of the national vote and thus obviate the need for a September run-off. END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENT REMAINS IN THE LEAD

¶2. (C) Indonesia's presidential election is just over a week away, taking place on July 8. Based on the latest polling, President Yudhoyono remains solidly in the lead. A poll published late last week contained the following results:

Candidate	LSI
Yudhyono	67.2%
Megawati	15.8
Kalla	8.3
Undecided	8.7

LSI = Indonesian Survey Institute

¶3. (SBU) Polls in Indonesia are not considered totally reliable, though LSI is considered one of the better firms. In any case, Yudhoyono--including in this most recent poll--has maintained a large lead in almost all public opinion surveys. That said, there have been a couple of outliers that have shown that Yudhoyono has a much narrower lead.

DEBATES INCONCLUSIVE, SO FAR

¶4. (C) The presidential and vice presidential debates do not seem to be changing the dynamic. As reviewed in reftel, the first presidential debate on June 18 was considered inconclusive and markedly non-substantive, with none of the three candidates gaining any sort of edge. This was also the case with the second debate on June 25. While there were few fireworks of any sort, the June 25 debate was considered a bit more active and less boring than the first debate. In general, commentators thought that Vice President Kalla performed relatively well. Yudhoyono also did well in defending his administration from criticism that it had not

done enough for the poor. Former president Megawati, however, earned poor marks for not being on point. All in all, nothing occurred that seemed to damage Yudhoyono and his lead in any way. The third and final debate will take place on July 2.

15. (SBU) In the meantime, the first of two vice presidential debates took place on June 23 (the second is scheduled for June 30). Prabowo Subianto, Megawati's running mate, performed relatively strongly, speaking authoritatively regarding the problem of poverty in Indonesia. Boediono (one name only), Yudhoyono's running mate, discussed his commitment to clean government. Prabowo and Boediono also spoke out strongly in favor of a secular Indonesia. Wiranto, playing a bit of an Islamic card, underlined that religion was vital for Indonesia as a "political-social ethic."

NOT A LOT OF EXCITEMENT IN CENTRAL JAVA

16. (C) During a recent visit, Pol/C did not notice a lot of excitement about the race in Central Java, a highly populated, vote-rich region. In Semarang--the capital of Central Java--and in outside areas, Pol/C noticed only a few posters and banners for the candidates, and there was little sign of party mobilization in terms of rallies and marches. Observers noted that there was little interest in a race that had not produced much in the way of fireworks, acrimony or give and take. Observers remarked that Yudhoyono--admired for his steadiness and consistency--was doing extremely well in the region. Megawati was only doing moderately well in a region that was traditionally a stronghold of her party. ONE ROUND OR TWO?

17. (C) The main question about the race remains whether President Yudhoyono can land a knockout blow on July 8 and wrap up the presidency that day. To do so, he needs to get over 50% of the vote and thus obviate the need for a September run-off. Commentators are divided as to whether he can expect to accomplish this. The slight majority seem to think that he can, but others say that--in a three person race--it is too difficult to predict and he might not make it.

18. (C) Indonesia has a high turnout rate, with about seven out of ten registered voters usually turning up at the polls. The lackluster nature of this campaign probably means no records on that score will be set, however. In addition, the President does not seem to be using the campaign as a means to create any sort of mandate for change. He's way ahead in the polls, and is largely playing to keep the lead and not make mistakes. If he indeed wins, this might mean that Indonesia is in for the same sort of moderate, sensible government he has provided the past several years, but not for any emphatic move toward reform.
HUME